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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NDJAMENA 001318

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SUBJECT: NEW CHADIAN REBEL ALLIANCE--UFDD

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Classified By: PolOff John O'Leary. Reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Three Chadian rebel groups formed a new alliance in October 2006. According to its communique, the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD) wants to organize transparent elections and abhors taking power by force. Nonetheless, it sent an armed column into central Chad in October and then, several days later, ambushed pursuing Chadian government troops. Personality conflicts and ethnic rivalries among the various rebel groups will keep the rebellion divided, thus dissipating the UFDD's potency. End comment.

¶2. (U) Three Chadian rebel groups announced in a communique dated October 10, 2006 that they were forming a new rebel alliance, the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD). The participating rebel groups are:

--A Gorane group, Union of Force for Development (UFD), headed by former Chadian General, Defense Minister, and Ambassador Mahamat Nouri Allatchi;

--An Arab groupm, Democratic Revolutionary Council (CDR), headed by former Chadian Foreign Minister and Ambassador Acheikh Ibni Oumar Said; and

--An Arab faction of the predominately Tama group, United Front for Change (FUC), headed by former FUC Secretary General Abdelwahid Aboud Makaye, of Ouaddaïen origion.

¶3. (U) According to the communique, the three groups have placed their fighters under a unified command and formed a provisional executive bureau to give the UFDD political leadership until the organization can hold a congress at an unspecified date. The communique continued with the following fundamental principles:

--an affirmation of faith in and attachment to the unity of the sons and daughters of Chad;

--a rejection of power seized by armed force and a commitment to hold a national forum comprised of representatives of the various armed movements, political parties, and civil society, for the purpose of deciding how to hold "free, transparent and equitable democratic elections".

--a desire to strengthen solidarity and unity among the political-military movements and to create "a large, united front of forces passionate about peace and justice";

--a commitment to respect Chadian agreements with international and regional partners;

--a commitment to abstain from interfering in the internal affairs of other countries; and

--a call on Chad,s partners to help the Chadian people "reestablish peace, unity, and justice".

¶4. (C) Observers consider the Gorane-Arab alliance important because these two groups have historic commercial and family ties; the Arabs are the largest Muslim ethnic group; and the Gorane are known as fierce fighters. (Former President Hisssein Habre was Gorane.) Further, in the milieu of Chadian ethnic politics, both groups traditionally disdain the Zaghawa tribe of President Deby and rival rebel leader Timan Erdimi (Rally for the Forces of Democracy--RaFD). The UFDD alliance--if it holds--could mark a significant development, not only in augmenting unified rebel forces, but also in the ability of customarily ethnic-based rebels to appeal to larger cross-sections of the Chadian public.

¶5. (U) Despite the UFDD's communique rejecting power taken by force, the group engages in offensive operations against the Deby regime. In late October, the alliance sent a column into central Chad where it briefly menaced the Chadian National Army (ANT) before withdrawing toward Central African Republic and Sudan. On October 29, UFDD forces ambushed pursuing Chadian forces, killing the ANT's commanding general and capturing vehicles, ammunition, and other materiel. Both sides reportedly took heavy casualties.

¶6. (C) Despite the reported urgings of Sudanese officials, it does not appear at this time that the Chadian rebels will be able to unite their major factions in any meaningful way. Embassy sources indicate that such an alliance attempted in August 2006 between Nouri,s own Union of Force for Development (UFD) and Erdimi,s RaFD quickly collapsed due to personality clashes between the two leaders. Additionally, a number of sources indicate that the non-Zaghawa rebels are

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not anxious to replace Zaghawa Deby with Zaghawa Erdimi.

¶7. (U) Embassy files indicate that:

--Mahamat Nouri was born in 1947 near Faya Largeau in northern Chad. A member of the Anakaza clan of the Gorane tribe, he held the rank of Major General in the ANT and served as Minister of Health in 1993, Livestock in 2000, and Defense in 2003. He became Deby,s ambassador to Saudi Arabia in late 2004 and held the post until his defection to the rebel cause in April 2006. Embassy sources confirm that he has diabetes. He is characterized as thoughtful, cautious, and crafty. His defection in late spring 2006 was considered to be a significant blow to the regime as he is believed to hold considerable sway among the Gorane.

--Acheikh Ibni Oumar Said was born on July 13, 1951 in N,Djamena. An ethnic Arab, he served in the Habre government as Minister of Education, Defense, and Foreign Affairs. With Deby,s assumption of power in 1990, he became Special Counselor to the President and served as Ambassador to the United States from 1992 to 1994. According to press reports in 2004, he characterized Deby's desire for a third presidential term as an attempt to become "President for Life". He is a long-time opponent of Deby and has spent many years in self-imposed exile, but he has never led a robust military force.

--Abdelwahid Aboud Makaye, an ethnic Ouaddaien from the Abeche region, was Secretary General of the FUC before leading a faction into the UFDD. In a January 2006 interview with Radio France International, he stated that the FUC had friendly relations with the Sudanese government and had met on Sudanese soil. Although he denied that the group received logistical support from the GOS, he was arrested by Sudanese authorities and held for several days. In September 2006, a

FUC spokesman indicated that Abdelwahid tried to unilaterally depose FUC president Mahamat Nour, in violation of the organization's bylaws. (Nour's exact status vis-a-vis the FUC is unclear at this time.) In October, Abdulwahid's faction joined the UFDD.

18. (C) Comment. It is by no means clear that the UFDD can survive any longer than any of the other rebel coalitions. Its October foray into Central Chad and successful ambush of ANT forces, however, indicate that it can undermine popular confidence in President Deby and play havoc with ANT morale. Nonetheless, the apparent enmity between the Zaghawa RaFD and the non-Zaghawa UFDD will work to Deby's advantage as he struggles to defend his regime. End comment.

19. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
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